

COOKEVILLE'S BOBBY GREENWOOD HAS PLAYED AGAINST THE GREATS

by [Buddy Pearson](#)

COOKEVILLE -- The Golf Channel recently celebrated the centennial birthdays of Byron Nelson, Sam Snead and Ben Hogan with an hour-long show American Triumvirate. The show provided an in-depth look into the three men who helped shape a modern, new era of golf.



(Pictured: Cookeville's Bobby Greenwood (right) poses with Byron Nelson (left) after playing against Nelson in the 1964 Texas Cup matches. Greenwood has played against legends like Nelson,

Sam Snead and Ben Hogan.

Cookeville golfing legend Bobby Greenwood knows first-hand what Nelson, Snead and Hogan were like. During his illustrious golfing career, Greenwood was able to play with and against golfing's greatest triumvirate.

"Byron Nelson, Sam Snead and Ben Hogan were great champions," said Greenwood. "They were perfectionists and hard workers. They were each great competitors and fighters along with being gifted athletes. They also had strong character."

Greenwood came across an aging Nelson in the 1964 Texas Cup matches. An All-American at North Texas State, Greenwood was on the amateur squad and was selected to take on Nelson, who represented the professional team. Greenwood says even though Nelson was way past his prime, the man who holds the record for winning 11 consecutive tournaments and 18 in one season was just as competitive 20 years after accomplishing those amazing feats.

"As I look back over my playing career, I've played against a lot of great players including Jack Nicklaus, Cary Middlecoff, Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Billy Joe Patton and Arnold Palmer, but Byron Nelson, even at his older age, was the most intense player I have ever played against. No wonder he won 11 tournaments in a row."

Greenwood shot 67 to beat Nelson 1-up, making a birdie on the last hole to card a 67. Nelson shot a 68.

Greenwood also played a match against Snead. At the age of 53, Greenwood was coming off a win in the Tennessee Senior PGA Championship and a fourth-place showing in the Senior PGA National Championship at Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. He faced Snead in an exhibition match at the Sam Snead Pro-Celebrity tournament in Nashville. Greenwood thought his chances were pretty good against an aging Snead, who was 79 at the time. Turns out, Greenwood was wrong.

"Sam drove it better than me, hit better iron shots, his chipping was excellent and he was even a better putter than me," admitted Greenwood. "He beat me 2-and-1. It was like an old thoroughbred racing against a young mule. I told him 'Sam, I'll try you again when you are 90.'"

Greenwood's path crossed with Hogan several times throughout his career. As a collegiate golfer at North Texas State, Greenwood would hitchhike from Denton to Fort Worth in order to go to Shady Oaks Country Club and watch Hogan practice. Hogan would go out to the No. 13 fairway and hit balls while

Greenwood would watch.

"Hogan would hit a bag of balls, stop and smoke a cigarette, and look over at me," Greenwood recalled. "We would nod at each other, but that was it. One day Hogan was going to hit some bunker shots and he asked me to get in his cart and ride over to the practice bunker. This was my introduction to the great Ben Hogan."

Greenwood later went to qualifying school and tied Johnny Miller for third place, earning a spot on the PGA Tour from 1969 to 1975. In 1971, Hogan and Greenwood's paths crossed once again.

"I'm on the first tee at the Westchester Golf Classic in Rye, New York with Hal Underwood," Greenwood said. "We're getting ready to play a practice round and Ben Hogan comes up and asks to join us. That was the last tournament he ever played in on the PGA Tour.

"He told me the shafts in my woods were too limber and he let me hit his driver on the 18th hole," Greenwood recalled. "As I addressed the ball, I could see that he was motioning to the large crowd that was following that I would hit his driver to the right. Naturally, trying to hit a good shot, I adjusted my grip and hit a good drive down the middle with his x-stiff driver. The next week I received a set of woods in the mail from Ben Hogan. This was a surprise because we didn't talk too much during the round. He was a man of few words. He mostly just said 'You're away.'"

Nelson, Snead and Hogan combined for 198 wins on the PGA Tour, including 21 major championships.

"They are the icons of the game," said Greenwood. "They are the greatest players who ever lived."

*Read more about the History of Putnam Co., TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>